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TAVETA ENIGMAS

INTRODUCTION.

ENIGMAS are a favourite form of amusement among the Bantu tribes of Africa. Collections have been made in various quarters, all presenting the same character (a character common to popular, as distinguished from "literary" enigmas, all the world over); indeed, some of the riddles are almost identical in form in many different languages—*e.g.*, "What is the house which has only one post?" the answer being "A mushroom." There is usually a set form for asking and answering riddles. These are not propounded in the course of ordinary conversation, but form the staple of a regular kind of entertainment, when the people of a village are seated round the fires after dark. Indeed, there is a widely prevalent notion that it is unlucky to ask riddles or tell tales before sunset. A little Yao boy told the Rev. Duff Macdonald that if children did so, horns would grow on their heads. (See also Mr. Dudley Kidd's *Savage Childhood*, p. 114, for a similar notion in South Africa.) The form observed by the Anyanja on Likoma Island is thus given by the Rev. H. B. Barnes:—A riddle-contest goes like this: A. "*Chindapi!*" ("A riddle!"). B. and the rest: "*Chijija!*" ("Let it come!") A. "I have built my house on the cliff." B., &c., all guess; if their guesses are wrong, A. simply repeats his riddle. If B., &c., can't guess right, they say "We pay up oxen!" A. may reply, "How many oxen?" B., &c., give a number. If A. is satisfied, he will now explain his riddle—"Kutu" (the ear) being the answer of the specimen given above. If B. guesses right, all clap hands, and another propounds a fresh riddle. (*Nyanja-English Vocabulary*, p. 19.) See also Dr. Weule's *Native Life in East Africa*, p.

160, and Mr. Sutherland Rattray's *Some Folk Lore, Stories and Songs in Chinyanja* (p. 153), collected among the "Angoni," west of Lake Nyasa.

The Taveta propounder, according to Mr. Hollis, says "*Kanawuya*" (a riddle); the others reply "*Kamucho*," of which the meaning is not clear, but it is probably similar to that of the Nyanja formula. The Rev. J. Raum (*Archiv für deutsche Kolonialsprachen*, Vol. XI., p. 303) says that the Wachaga, in asking riddles, say "*Orão!*" to which the answer is "*Orão-jo*." He adds that "the meaning of these words cannot be ascertained." There is a similar difficulty about the Nyanja (or Yao?) formula "*Mangondamange*," heard at Blantyre.—ED.

KANAWUYA YA KITUWETA.

TAVETA ENIGMAS.

The propounder says: *Kanawuya*.

The others reply: *Kamucho*.

1. Enigma.—*Apa asinza ñgombe; ula eza nde kuchwa, na teisiayo.*

Father has slaughtered an ox; everybody that comes cuts (off some meat), yet it does not become finished.

Reply.—*Ino*.

A whetstone.

Also: *Kajama kangu kadongo, wandu wakaza, wakachwa, wasiidime kukura.*

My meat was small; people came and cut it, but they were unable to finish it.

Ino.

A whetstone.

2. *Chochori ighana.*

A hundred fruits.

Malala ma nzoke.

The cells of honey-comb.

3. *Dari sela.*

(That which) reaches the other bank (of a river).

Mdando wa njeta.

A spider's web.

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4. *Haiki-haiki toudima kugura.*

You cannot catch this thing here.

*Kivuri.*¹

A shadow.

5. *Hena vitito viiri, kimwe kibaha na kimwe kidongo.*

Nikaingia hena kibaha, nikañgola isibo limwe; nikaingia hena kidongo, nikañgola masibo meri.

There are two forests, one big and one small. I entered the big one, and I rooted up one stick; I entered the small one, and I rooted up two sticks.

Kitito kibaha ni ñgombe yamogha ndama; kitito kidongo ni mbuji yamogha maza.

The big forest is a cow that has given birth to a calf; the small forest is a goat that has given birth to twins.

6. *Huu-hu.*

(A noise supposed to resemble the sound of wailing afar off.)

Mundu afuia hae.

A person who has died a long way away.

7. *Idje ni kahandi idje kanikura.*

If it were a knife it would finish me.

Mrango na ngujo.

A door and a door-post. (*Idje . . . idje* is an old form; *kicha . . . kicha* is generally used nowadays. *Mrango* is a door made of wood, the commoner kind of door, which is made from the raphia palm, being called *lughwi*. The space caused by the door being open is called *mbenge*. Taveta doors are not fastened to the posts, but leant against them. The idea here is that if a knife were thrust against the post as frequently and as hard as the door, it would in course of time cut the post in two.)

8. *Ikaa mbai ii nami niikae ila, tukome nyoka.*

Stay on this side and let me stay on that, so that we may kill a snake.

Wandu wehua mahemba.

People who pound maize. (Indian corn is cleaned in a mortar by two people, who pound alternately.)

¹ This riddle is given in Yao by Dr. Weule as "*aju, aji*," "this, this," accompanied by an explanatory gesture. It is known in Nyanja as "*ichi, ichi*," meaning the same as the above. Mr. Rattray has a riddle, 'a little thing that cannot be lifted,' with the same answer."—ED.

9. *Ikaa mbai ii nami niikae mbai ila, tumñgole mcheku masara.*

Stay on this side and let me stay on that, so that we strip off the old man's bad clothes.

Nyumba isanzua.

A house which is having the thatch taken off.

10. *Iseto la apa lasha likashighwa lutiriwo.*

Father's cloth has been burnt and the seam left (unharmd).

Mbuwa jikasha jinashighwa nzia.

When the plain is burnt the road is left (untouched).

(Cf. the Masai enigma :—

Einosa en-gop en-gima, neiñgwari naikoro.

The fire has eaten the earth, but something has been left untouched.

E-or.

The bare spot.)¹

11. *Iya ni mdongo, kake etisiwe kunirughia kijo kinona.*

Mother is small, but she knows (how) to cook nice food for me.

Nyuki.

A bee.

12. *Kadada kangu kehatwa nezo.*

My little friend has been well brought up.

Lwetati.

A honey barrel cut ready for hollowing out. (The stem of the tree selected for a honey barrel is called *mbighi*; the honey barrel before it is hollowed out is called *lwetati*; and the finished article *msiku*.)

13. *Kagonji na mwana kanikuria mteme.*

The sheep and its lamb have finished my plantation.

Kitwi na musu.

The mortar and pestle (for grinding corn).

14. *Kaki, nikumbuke.*

Wait, that I may recollect.

Ngamura.

The cud.

¹ Cf. also the Nyanja "The house has been burned, and there remains only the cross-beam."—Rattray, *loc. cit.*, p. 154.—ED.

15. *Kamuswa kamwana kenona.*

A little child's sweet gruel.

Luwohe.

Sleep.

16. *Kinya hamwe.*

(That which) falls (like rain) in one place.

Vichanana.

The buds of the banana flower.

17. *Kisikonya.*

(That which) does not wink.

Nyerere.

The eye of the house—i.e., a peep-hole in the wall.

18. *Koda ngata tutike mawa ha mfumwa.*

Make a ladle and let us take beer to the chief.

Kitize cha nguro.

The tail of a dog. (The curly tail of a dog is supposed to resemble a ladle fixed to the end of a stick.)

19. *Koko afwa easame.*

Grandmother has died with her mouth open.

Ikafi na luzighi.

A dried banana on a cord. (Bananas, the staple food of the Taveta, are stripped of their skin, split nearly in half lengthways, and hung on a cord to dry. They look something like a clothes-pin. An unripe banana is called *Idio*; when ripe, *Ifundi*; when dry, *Ikafi*.)

20. *Koko agwa guni akafwa na lunyambo.*

Grandmother has fallen off the roof and has died together with her stick.

Ngoswe.

A rat. (The stick is supposed to be the rat's tail.)

21. *Koko mdongo amgusha koko mbaha.*

The small grandmother has felled the big grandmother.

Izoka na muti.

An axe and a tree.

22. *Lumungu lwa apa lwaimwa kumea mani na kuwa-twawatwa.*

Grass is not left to grow and to be trodden upon in father's council place.

Laŋgata ya kutaha mbombe.

A well from which water is drawn.

(The councils are generally held in the shade of a big tree.)

23. *Luzwa lwa apa kinyeghe.*

Father's hair is white.

Ifuo la mawa.

The froth of beer.

24. *Mbwange wangu ayaa ekidedema bagha.*

My warrior has slept trembling all night.

Kamuti keimuke mfuro.

A small tree which grows in a river.

25. *Mfumwa abigha lughunda, wakafuma wa ndoro nyewa tiki.*

The chief has blown (lit., struck) the horn, and they came out (to him) with only their white colobus monkey skins (on).

Mahemba.

Maize stalks. (The fluffy tops of the ripening maize-cobs are supposed to resemble the white shoulders of the colobus monkey. These skins are much worn by the Taveta on festive occasions. A Chief calls his followers by blowing into an oryx horn.)

26. *Mfumwa mwezu isangeni.*

There is only one king on the earth.

Nzano.

The sun.

27. *Mikota yakwe apa iringanane.*

Father's skin-garments are alike (one to sleep and the other to cover himself with).

Wanga na si.

The heaven and the earth.

(Cf. the Masai and the Nandi enigmas:—

Masai: *Aata 'n-dapan ainei are naarisyo.*

I have my two skins which are alike.

Eng-ai o en-gop.

The heaven and the earth.

Nandi: *Kiaeny giplelyo ak kipsitye kw'oiechin muiuek.*

I slaughtered a white ox and a red ox, and the hides were alike.

Parak ak ingoiny.

Above and beneath—i.e., the heaven and the earth.)

28. *Mnduetu mdongo aidima kumbeka apa mbaha.*

My small brother has been able to carry my big father (or my father's elder brother) on his back.

Lutarigho lwa kuwanika msiku.

A stick for suspending a honey-barrel. (Honey-barrels or bee-hives, which are made by hollowing out the stems of trees, are suspended to branches by a stick, or two sticks tied together, with a fork at each end. A stick thus supports the stem of the tree.)

29. *Muti mbaha mselia ndeghe misi yose.*

A big tree in which birds congregate every day.

Kichinda.

A market place.

30. *Muti mbaha ndeghe jiseia misi yose.*

A big tree in which birds descend every day.

Kaa ha mfumwa, wandu wewunganyika.

A chief's house in which people assemble.

31. *Muti mujiru kititoni.*

A black tree in the wood.

Machichi.

Black ants. (Other replies to this enigma are *Makaa*, charcoal, and *Ngima*, a monkey, *Cercopithecus viridis-griseo*.)

32. *Muyoe mcheku aho guni kicha achika ngoro.*

Look at the old woman there on the roof how she is already dead.

Madio mewibwa.

Unripe bananas that are ripening. (Bananas are not left on the tree to ripen, but the unripe bunches are cut off and hung up till they are ready.)

33. *Mwera wagwa mivwa yakwe, ikatungia wandu hae.*

The acacia tree has fallen with its thorns, and they pierce people afar off.

Mvua.

Rain.¹

34. *Naanika makafi mangu; nikiwuka heyawo, nikama-sowa.*

I have put out my bananas to dry; when I awake in the

¹ Put more prosaically by the Angoni, "Something which comes from far away and finds us here" (Rattray, p. 154).—ED.

morning they are not there, and I miss them. (Vide Note to No. 19.)

Ndondo.

Stars.

35. *Nabigha lughunda, wakanizia wa marungu tiki.*

I have blown (lit., struck) the horn, and they came to me with nothing but clubs.

Mbeke.

Eleusine grain. (The *Eleusine coracana* plant, which bears a small kind of grain, is supposed to resemble a club. See also note to 25.)

36. *Nachila chila yangu, ikarema; akaza mundu mmwe, akachwa.*

I was doing my business, but it was too much (for me); one man came, and it was done (lit., cut).

Machugha.

The stones used for supporting a cooking pot over a fire. (A cooking pot cannot be successfully balanced unless three stones are used as a tripod.)

(Cf. the Masai enigma:—

Aata 'l-muran lainei ōkuni, nemeduñgo en-gigwena metii ol-li-ōkuni.

I have my three warriors, but a discussion is not finished if the third is not present.

'Soito le-'n-gima.

Cooking stones.)

37. *Nafora itegho langu, likamgusha apa na iya.*

I have dug my game pit, and it has made my father and mother fall down.

Wui wukaarehuwa wandu weyaia.

A bed which is made for people to sleep in.

38. *Nagera muvwi wangu si usihambiwe; ukahunduka uhambiwe.*

I have thrown down my arrow with no feathers on it; when it returned it had feathers.

Mbojo.

The bean. (A bean before and after planting is likened to an arrow without and with feathers.)

39. *Naima mteme wangu, mrinji ni 'mwe.*

I have dug up my garden, (there is) one guardian.

Kitize cha ñgombe.

The tail of a cow. (The tail of a cow, which is continually employed flicking the flies off the cow's body, is supposed to resemble a person driving away birds from the fields.)

40. *Namjika koko, akaniuma kichaa.*

I have buried grandmother, and she has bitten my finger.

Idio wawimbika motoni ukasha kichaa.

The banana which you have baked by the fire, and you have scorched your finger. (Bananas are baked by being buried in the ashes of the fire.)

41. *Nasinza ñgombe yangu, ikakughawa yo-njenye.*

I have slaughtered my ox, and it has divided itself up.

Mbaso ja muti jikuwiritu uko na uko.

Chips of a tree which (when felled) are scattered hither and thither.

42. *Nasinza ñgombe yangu, nyama isiizuje ighanza.*

I have slaughtered my ox, (but) the meat does not fill the hand.

Nyui.

Hair. (Slaughtering an ox is here used for shaving the head.)¹

43. *Natema, nisiwone arata.*

I have cut (it), yet I see no mark.

Mbombe.

Water.

44. *Natonga kusela; nikihunduka nikagura ñgombe ya apa kitize.*

I went for a walk; when I returned I seized the tail of father's cow.

Ngwaru.

A pad for carrying a water-jar on. (A pad is made of a long strip of grass, which is here supposed to resemble a cow's tail, rolled up. When people go to fetch water they generally make their pads after they have drawn their water.)²

¹ The Nyanja enigma for "hair" is: "A tree which you cut down to-day, and the next it begins to sprout."—ED.

² See the note on p. 198 as to the Zulu use of the word *inkata*.—ED.

45. *Natuma mugheni wangu heyawo kere, akahunduka chamagheri.*

I have sent my stranger away early in the morning, and he has returned in the evening.

Lughwi lukajuwa kere ni chamagheri lunehunduywa.

A door which is opened in the morning and is closed (lit., returned) in the evening. (Vide note to No. 7.)

46. *Naza na mugheni: akakezia mi nisimekezia.*

I came with a stranger: he gave greeting before I did.

Njugha.

Bells worn on the ankles.

47. *Naza na mugheni, nikamshigha shighati.*

I have come with a stranger, and I left him outside.

Ijitu.

A banana leaf. (The Taveta invariably use a banana leaf as an umbrella to keep off the rain.)

48. *Ndemakuri ya kweja bili wanga.*

The small snake has made the big snake climb up.

Uchowo na ngoi.

The cord and the rope. (When a person wishes to fix a honey barrel in a tree that he cannot climb, he throws a club, on to which is fastened a cord, over a branch, and by means of the cord hauls up a rope. This he makes fast, and then climbs up it, drawing the honey barrel after him.)

49. *Ndorome yangu itonga ikiitisha mafuta na nzia.*

When my ram walks he pours fat on the road.

Itamba.

Snails. (One can always tell where the common snails have been by the slime on the road which they leave behind them.)

50. *Nduwi idedema.*

The hill quakes.

Ndundu ya ñgombe.

The hump of an ox.

51. *Nina mbora wangu wedi, kake enyuka fua.*

I have my beautiful daughter, but her nose stinks.

Kipolopolo.

A gun.

52. *Nina wabora wangu; nikawahamba weshiniwa, kake nikiwahambua weiziha.*

I have my daughters; when I decorate them they are spoilt, but when I tear off their decorations they are improved.

Nginda.

The banana plant. (All the dead leaves, strips of bark, and suckers must be torn off or cut away from the banana tree to make it grow properly and bear fruit.)

53. *Nina wabwange wangu webighana puti.*

I have my warriors who fight all day long.

Ngaghe.

Reeds.

54. *Nina wabwange wangu weengi kaa, kake tukatonga shighati eoka 'mwe.*

I have (my) many warriors at home, but when we go to the bush country they become one.

Ngoi.

Rope. (Rope used for fixing honey barrels in trees is made by twisting thin cords together.)

55. *Nina wabwange wangu weeri welelana, esina elela.*

I have my two warriors who race, and neither wins.

Maghu.

Legs.

56. *Nina wana wangu weengi: esina wa ghati nete wa kurongora.*

I have (my) many children: nobody is first or last.

Nyambo ya kuwamba ngingo.

Pegs (which are being used) for stretching a skin.

(Cf. the Masai enigma:—

Aata 'l-muran lainei, nemetii ol-le-bata.

I have my warriors, and no one is last.

'N-jeito.

The pegs.)

57. *Nini tuoho weeri tusibighana?*

Why are there two of us and we do not quarrel?

Wijewu.

The two sides of a deep gorge.

58. *Nini uoho na nyama usila?*

Why have you meat and you don't eat it?

Lumi.

The tongue.

59. *Nyumba yangu ya muti 'mwe.*¹

My house (has) one pole.

Kichogha.

A mushroom.

60. *Nyumba yangu yasha, likashighwa izunya liwanikwe wanga.*

My house has been burnt, and the fat which was hung up has been left.

Mweji; nyumba ikasha, mweji uikee ndeho.

The moon; when the house was burnt the moon remained where it was.

61. *Sengelele marua.*

(That which) slides enters.

Nyoka iingia na ikongo.

A serpent entering a hole in the ground.

62. *Tandika suke wateri walale.*

Spread out the cloth that people may lie down.

Masuji.

The leaves of the cucumber plant. (The leaves are supposed to spread themselves out to enable the cucumbers to lie on them.)

63. *Tiri kasea, tiri kakwea.*

Sometimes it descends, sometimes it ascends.

Zowu.

An elephant. (Elephants live sometimes in the hills and sometimes in the plains.)

64. *Ubighiwa ni mvua usikuwisa nini?*

Why don't you hide yourself when you are rained upon?

Kidongoloso.

The arm-pit.

65. *Wana wangu weringanane tiki.*

My children are all alike (only).

Majegho.

The teeth.

¹ Cf. the Chinyanja "*Ndamanga nyumba ndi mzati umodzi* (or *nsichi imodzi*) *n'chiani?*"—"I have built my house with one post, what is it?"—ED.

66. *Wabwange wangu wetonga ngondo weteta, wekihunduka wehujachwi.*

When my youths go to war they talk, when they return they are silent.

Viwo vya mbombe.

Water gourds.

(*Cf. the Nandi enigma :—*

Atinye cheptan-nyō ne'ngowendi kâp-tich ko'sikot, tanyone ka kosisanu.

I have a daughter who when she goes to the cattle-kraal sings as she goes, and when she returns home is silent.

Sotonik.

The milk calabashes.)

A. C. HOLLIS.

We greatly regret that, owing to inadvertence, the following errors occurred in Mr. Hollis's paper "Taveta Proverbs," published in this *Journal* for April, 1910 :—

No. 37.	p. 261.	anyuka	<i>should be</i>	enyuka.
„ 44.	p. 262.	zown	„	zowu.
„ 46.	„	no idiwa	„	na ndiwa.
„ 51.	„	tiewe	„	teiwe.
„ 53.	„	kukwed	„	kukwea.

—ED.